(d) if so, whether any concrete steps in his regard have been worked out?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI V.V.N. SOMU): (a) to (d) The equirement of funds is estimated by the Ministry of Defence, in consultation with he Service Headquarters on the basis of nticipated, obligatory and contractual ayments, regular and recurrent xpenditure as well as new schemes nder the ongoing modernisation rogramme of the Defence Services. The equirement of funds for the current year as projectd by the Ministry of Defence o the Ministry of Finance, to enable a ecision on the actual allocation, keeping n view the overall availability of national esources, national security and the equirements of different sectors.

Modernisation of our Armed Forces is n on-going process which takes into ccount the changing threat scenario, the dvancement of technology, the global nd regional security environment and he availability of resources. A concerted xercise was undertaken this year, as in revious years to determine the priorities f modernisation, and the resources to be llocated in this context.

Diversion of National Highway-54

1662. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) the latest position on the diversion of National Highways-54 at Ramnagar near Silchar Town;

(b) whether the project has been cleared and funds sanctioned;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the latest position of the approach road of Katakhal bridge on National Highway-54?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T. G. VENKATRAMAN): (a) to (c) Alignment for diversion is approved. However, the bridge over river Barak at Badrighat on the bypass is under finalisation. During 1996-97 funds have been provided for payment of compensation for land.

(d) The approach road was sanctioned in February, 1996 and the work is in progress. The two Railway overbridges in the approaches are being entrusted to Railways.

New Telephone Exchanges in Karnataka

1663. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to set up new telephone exchanges with latest technology in Karnataka during the current year; and

(b) if so, the names of the places where these are proposed to be set up?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VERMA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) New Telephone Exchanges with the latest technology are planned for commissioning at Mysore, Bangalore, Belgaum and Hubli in Karnataka during 1996-97.

Extension of reservation for SCs/STs/ OBCs in Defence Services

1664. SHRI PARAG CHALIHA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is considering extension of reservations for SCs/STs/ OBCs in recruitment to defence services; and

(b) if so, the details thereof, and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI N.V.N. SOMU): (a) and (b) There is no proposal under consideration of the Government to make reservations in the Defence Services for SCs/STs/OBCs Recruitment to the Defence Services is open to all Indian nationals irrespective of caste, creed, community, religion. The endeavour has been to provide free and equal opportunity to all sections of the population to join the Defence Forces and render service in accordance with the ideals of secularism, democracy and social justice.

In order to maintain highest standards of operational efficiency, appointments and selections to the Defence Services have been made strictly on merit and no reservation on the basis of caste, community, religion, area or class is provided.

Special Courts to deal with atrocities on SCs/STs and other weaker sections

1665. SHRI NAGENDRA NATH OJHA: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any special court has been set up anywhere in the country in the last five years to take up serious cases of atrocities committed on scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and other weaker sections; and

(b) if so, the number of courts set up and the progress in the trial of cases before them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MOHD. MAQBOOL DAR): (a) and (b) Special Courts have been specified or separately established in most districts of the country, except in the States of Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland, for trying cases of atrocities against Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes under the SCs and STs (Prevantion of Atrocities) Act, 1989. Reports received from the State Governments and Union Territory Administrations so far indicate tha around 3167 cases were disposed of b the courts in 1994 and that around 2470 cases were pending with them as at th end of that year.

Payment of Salaries to D.T.C. Staff

1666. SHRI MOHINDAR SINGI KAYLAN: Will the Minister c SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased t state:

(a) whether Government are awar that payment of salaries and other perk (arrears of bonus, D.A. and IR) to th workers of DTC have not been made i time since 1992;

(b) if so, whether Government hav made any inquiry on non-payment o dues to the DTC workers by th management;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the present position in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T. G VENKATRAMAN): (a) to (d) DTC ha been incurring heavy losses for the last s many years and its internal resources ar not sufficient to liquidate its committe liabilities in time. As a result, there ha been some delay in disbursing salaries t the employees. However, all th employees of DTC have been paid thei salary upto the Month of June, 1996 bu due to paucity of funds, the employee have not been paid arrears of bonus D.A. and interim relief. The Governmen has taken various measures to provid sufficient funds to DTC depending upo the availability of budgetary resources t enable them for timely disbursement o salaries to its employees and DTC is als making all out efforts to generate mor funds to enable it to liquidate it committed liabilities.